

the floor previously because it is another contract to provide electrical capabilities to the Army camps. When you put up an Army camp, you have the need to provide electricity. And I held two hearings on this subject.

This is a photograph of SGT Ryan Maseth—quite a remarkable young man, a Green Beret from Pennsylvania. He is shown there with his mother, who is a very courageous woman as well. He was killed in Iraq, but Sergeant Maseth wasn't killed by a bullet from an enemy gun; Sergeant Maseth was killed taking a shower. He was electrocuted in a shower. And it wasn't just Sergeant Maseth; others lost their lives as well—electrocuted in a shower, power-washing a Jeep.

The fact is, what we discovered when we held the hearings was that the work that was done to provide electricity and to wire these camps was done in some cases by people who didn't have the foggiest idea what they were doing. Third-country nationals who couldn't speak English and didn't know the first thing about electricity were working on these issues.

The Army originally told Mrs. Maseth that her son died, they thought, because he took an electrical appliance into the shower. No, he didn't. He was killed because shoddy electrical work was done that ended up killing this soldier.

Now, Kellogg, Brown & Root denied that, as did the Defense Department. The inspector general did the report and said: Oh, yeah. Yeah, that sure did happen.

In fact, let me show you what the inspector general has said.

This is from Jim Childs, master electrician hired by the Army Corps of Engineers, to inspect this electrical work for which the American taxpayer paid a bundle. Jim Childs, master electrician, went in after I held the hearings. He said:

[T]he electrical work performed by KBR in Iraq was some of the most hazardous, worst quality work I have ever inspected.

Let me show what Kellogg, Brown & Root said:

The assertion that KBR has a track record of shoddy electrical work is simply unfounded.

The inspector general did the inspection. We had to redo much of the work in Iraq and Afghanistan, inspect it all and redo much of it. In the meantime, people died. We have demonstrated that there is evidence of shoddy work in a range of areas. Yet the contractors continue to be given additional contracts. For the shoddy electrical work for which some soldiers gave their lives, this contractor was not only given the money from the contract but bonus awards for excellent work. I have tried very hard to get the Pentagon to take back those bonuses, unsuccessfully. But the reason I am going through this is to point out that we have for a decade now been shoveling money out the door at a time when we are deep in debt, spending a great deal

of money on the defense of this country, on the Defense Department, on the war effort, and so on. A substantial portion of that which goes out the back of the Pentagon in the form of contracts has represented the most egregious waste in the history of the country.

One of my great regrets is that we did not—and we should have; I tried very hard—ever get constituted a Truman-type committee which existed in the 1940s to investigate this sort of spending and to try to shut down spending that is not only injuring our troops and disserving them but injuring taxpayers.

I started by talking about the issue of sodium dichromate. We think about 1,000 soldiers were at risk at a place in Iraq that is called Qarmat Ali. Some have died. Those soldiers who were at Qarmat Ali told of seeing something like sand blowing all over the place. It was red, however. That was the sodium dichromate, a deadly carcinogen. It is the subject over which a movie was made called "Erin Brockovich."

We have tried for a long time to get the Pentagon to be as active and involved as they should be with respect to the health and safety of those 1,000 soldiers who were potentially exposed. Like most of these issues, they have been very slow to respond.

My point is twofold. One is about supporting America's fighting men and women, doing what is right for them. There have been a number of people in the Pentagon—one of whom testified before the Armed Services Committee in the Senate and who I strongly believe knew he was not telling the truth. He was a general, as a matter of fact. There have been a number who have denied virtually all of these circumstances. Yet inspectors general have investigated and said they are wrong.

Obviously, the contractor denies these things. The contractors have gotten wealthy doing this. We have had whistleblowers come in. A woman came in and told us she was working at a recreational facility in the war theater, and that is at the base. There is a facility where you can play pool and ping-pong and do various things. It was a facility with many different rooms. She worked for Kellogg, Brown & Root and she was to keep track of how many people came in because they got paid based on how many people came in.

She said: What they told me to do was to keep track of how many people came in to each room, and that is what we billed the government for. If somebody came in and went through three rooms, the government was billed for three visits. I went to the people in charge and said: This is fraud. We can't do this. We are defrauding the government. They immediately put me in detention in a room under guard and sent me out of the country the next day.

It is the story of virtually all the hearings we have held.

The point is twofold. One is to protect America's soldiers and do right by

the men and women who have gone to war because this country asked them to. Secondly, on behalf of the American taxpayer, to decide if we are choking on debt and deficit, to continue doing what we know is wrong, shoveling these contracts out the door without adequate accountability is something we have to pay attention to.

Secretary Gates has tried more than others. When I began these hearings, which stretched into 21 hearings, the then-Secretary of Defense had virtually no time for these issues. I have had an opportunity to talk to Secretary Gates. I know he has tried very hard to make changes. Moving the Pentagon on these issues is very difficult. There is a relationship always between the Pentagon and the largest suppliers and largest companies and contractors with whom they do business. My experience has been we can have the goods and have them red-handed. We can have internal memorandum from the company itself that says they screwed up, could have caused mass sickness and death, but publicly they will say none of this happened. It is about deception, about lying, about cheating taxpayers, and about not standing up the way we should stand up for America's fighting men and women. This Congress needs to do much more. Congress needs much stronger oversight, much more attentive oversight on this kind of spending.

I went back and read the Truman committee work. Harry Truman was a Senator. At a time when a President of his own party was in the White House, he insisted that they establish the Truman Commission, of which he became chairman. He insisted on getting a committee to investigate waste in the Pentagon. They eventually created the committee, and they made him chairman. They held 60 hearings a year for 7 years. The committee was started with \$16,000. In today's dollars, it saved \$16 billion. Think of that. There is way too little oversight going on on these issues. I have just scratched the surface in the 21 hearings I chaired. Many of my colleagues were in those hearings. This country deserves better.

One of the significant responsibilities of Congress is not just to appropriate money and evaluate what money needs to be appropriated for but to do oversight. When we send money out the door, this Congress needs to do better oversight. What I have discovered and decided is that oversight is sadly lacking at the Pentagon. There are too many men and women, including Bunnatine Greenhouse, who gave up their careers and lost their jobs because they had the courage to speak out and say: This is wrong, this is fraud, this is cheating, this undermines our soldiers. There are too many men and women who gave up their careers because they had the courage to do that. We have whistleblower protections, but in many cases it doesn't work the way it should. There is much for us to do.